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ABSTRACT

Intended primarily for educational administrators, this review presents an analysis of the literature, previously announced in RIE, concerning the use of paraprofessionals in the schools. The reviewer discusses (1) who paraprofessionals are and what they do; (2) administrative problems associated with paraprofessional employment; (3) paraprofessional effectiveness; and (4) the recruitment, training, and career potentials of paraprofessionals. A 20-item bibliography of related literature is included. (Author)

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# Paraprofessionals

Ian Templeton

> We strive to improve the quality of preparation for the teaching profession, yet we ask teachers to perform duties far beneath their level of training. . . . We advocate higher teacher salaries, yet assign our able teachers to tasks that could be done by people with far less ability. . . . We seek to raise the professional status of teachers, yet keep them performing duties hardly professional. . . . We strive for good teaching morale, yet we keep teachers dissatisfied by requiring that they perform duties which they dislike (but others might enjoy doing). We want teachers to be creative—to experiment, to improve—yet we keep them bored by clerical tasks. . . . It is only common sense to place people at the level of their best talent.
>
> Stanley L. Clement in *Conant (1971)*

A major objective in employing paraprofessional aides is to increase the effectiveness of professional personnel. As a step in this direction, nonprofessionals are taking attendance, supervising playgrounds, monitoring tests, and performing similar tasks—duties traditionally performed by teachers. When paraprofessionals assume supportive roles not requiring the extensive training of certificated personnel, teachers gain more time for student instruction.

A survey of the extensive literature on paraprofessionals reveals a variety of findings and opinions on their definition, preparation, use, and effectiveness. Despite this lack of consensus, as educators explore the merits of differentiating staffs, increasing accountability, and seeking economies of operation, more nonprofessional aides will appear in the

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schools. For these reasons it is essential that administrators possess a basic understanding of the effective use of nonprofessional aides.

To provide a useful introduction to the subject, the literature included in this review has been selected to supply information on basic questions concerning paraprofessionals: Who are paraprofessionals and what do they do? What are the administrative problems associated with their use? Are paraprofessionals effective? How should they be recruited, selected, and trained?

For the most part, only current (1970 or later) documents have been included. Fourteen of the documents are available from the ERIC Document Reproduction Service. Complete instructions for ordering documents are given at the end of the review.

## WHO PARAPROFESSIONALS ARE AND WHAT THEY DO

A National Education Association (1970) booklet defines paraprofessionals as "that segment of auxiliary personnel working directly with professional educators to assist them in discharging their professional duties." The booklet summarizes the findings and recommendations of a 1970 task force that reviewed ongoing paraprofessional programs. After a brief examination of the history and present status of paraprofessional school personnel, the report discusses their definition, roles, functions, and needs.

According to the NEA document, the roles and responsibilities of the paraprofessional must be clarified in relation to the professional educator. In addition, there is a continuing need for preservice and inservice training programs for all personnel involved in paraprofessional programs. To meet economic and organizational needs of paraprofessionals, the booklet suggests establishing an organizational structure related to the united teaching profession. Specific task force recommendations focus on expanding the NEA/ACT auxiliary personnel program to give it the status of a division or section within the NEA. Guidelines are presented to assist local, state, and national associations in efforts to organize paraprofessionals.

Part of a document by Johns and Glovinsky (1970) is concerned with the question of what a paraprofessional does. The authors have constructed a taxonomy that divides paraprofessional tasks into two main categories: noninteracting (performed with things rather than with persons) and interacting (performed with either children or adults). Each main category has three subcategories. These subcategories and examples of each are as follows:

*Noninteracting*

Housekeeping: assisting in keeping the room neat and orderly; maintaining room equipment and supplies

Clerical: writing an assignment on the board; duplicating materials; correcting objective tests

Technical: setting up and operating a motion picture projector; tape

recording a student presentation; constructing bulletin boards

*Interacting*

Clerical: collecting milk money; operating a classroom library; making out forms for tardy pupils

Monitorial: supervising a cafeteria; accompanying children to an assembly; recess playground duty

Tutorial: helping a child locate a reference book; drilling a child on his multiplication facts; working with a small group during a play rehearsal

Bernstein and Demak (1970) examine the tasks performed by paraprofessionals in order to obtain operational job descriptions, establish career ladder hierarchies, and define bases for recruitment, assignment, and training. Data were collected through questionnaires, interviews with paraprofessionals and professionals, and systematic observations of twelve superior classroom aides.

These authors use the taxonomy of paraprofessional tasks constructed by Johns and Glovinsky as the basis for developing a hierarchy of tasks and a three- or four-step career ladder. Many different positions are then related to the career ladder. The study finds the career ladder concept viable. Results also suggest that working situations should provide more interaction between professionals and paraprofessionals, and that personnel should be selected for their ability to perform effectively, or for their potential to learn interactive tasks.

In his address to the International Reading Association, Harris (1971) discusses the history and proper use of paraprofessionals. He divides their work into clerical, housekeeping, instructional, motivational, and integrational duties. If paraprofessionals are to be effective in performing these tasks, teachers should have training in management techniques so that they can properly direct the paraprofessionals teamed with them.

Harris makes several specific criticisms of current paraprofessional programs. They train paraprofessionals to be competitive with teachers rather than supportive, emphasize community involvement for its own sake, and overburden classroom teachers with program responsibilities. To ensure that paraprofessional programs will accomplish valid educational improvements, Harris believes the following are necessary:

- awareness that a paraprofessional program is not justifiable purely as an economic measure
- openmindedness and willingness to explore alternatives
- training of specialized educational technicians for specific jobs
- legislation to permit expanded use of nonprofessionals in the instructional program
- a career ladder enabling able paraprofessionals to become professional teachers

The final report of a 1969-70 indepth study on the use of paraprofessionals in the New York City public schools is presented

by the Institute for Educational Development (1970). The paraprofessionals studied were employed in "district decentralized" projects. The overall concept guiding the study was that paraprofessionals are certain kinds of people who perform certain tasks and have an impact on certain people around them. Out of the assumption came the three tasks set for the study: to develop a profile of paraprofessionals, giving background characteristics related to program purposes and intended paraprofessional impacts; to survey the nature of paraprofessional work, determining specific activities carried out, in what kinds of schools, in what physical locations, and on what time schedule; and to determine the impact paraprofessionals have on the paraprofessional himself, and on pupils, teachers, the principal, and parents.

A special report by the National School Public Relations Association (1972) examines the increasing use of paraprofessionals. The report's extensive coverage of the topic includes discussion of recruiting, hiring, assigning, supervising, training, administering, and evaluating aides. Sample programs in Minneapolis, New York City, Dade County (Florida), and multiunit schools in twenty-seven states are considered.

In an instructional module on team teaching, York (1971) examines the roles of professional and paraprofessional personnel. The roles are clarified to enable preservice and inservice teachers to understand how team teaching can make efficient use of all available human resources. Study materials include articles on personnel, nonprofessional aides in science, what teacher aides can and cannot do, and diagnostic teaching.

### ADMINISTRATIVE PROBLEMS

For his study, Bearden (1970) reviewed research and related literature to determine major administrative problem areas in the employment of teacher aides and to develop administrative guidelines for each of the problem areas identified. Then, in a random sampling of the Missouri school districts reporting use of teacher aides in 1968-69, questionnaires and interviews were used to determine the agreement or disagreement between developed guidelines and current administrative practices, and between developed guidelines and opinions of individuals in charge of teacher aide programs. Bearden found that the developed guidelines were not fully used in current practices, but that administrator opinion endorsed them.

A Bureau of Educational Research survey of Washington and Oregon school districts with an average daily membership of 5,000 or more indicated that little thought had been given to the legal and professional problems involved in the use of volunteer aides (Stanley 1970). The author clearly defines the responsibilities of both teacher and aide, and lists duties that aides can undertake. Examples are given of the best guidelines and procedures for programs intended to give adult assistance to the teacher. In addition to guidelines for volunteer chairmen, aides, teachers, and principals, appendixes include details on the orientation and training of aides, and on annual evaluation of the aides by teachers, principals, and school chairmen.

## PARAPROFESSIONAL EFFECTIVENESS

An extensive 1968 study on teacher aides revealed that very little was known about the assistance that such aides supposedly provide. Olivero [1970] reports that the study indicates some direct relationship between use of aides and action programs intended to improve instruction. He believes more substantive evaluation of paraprofessional effectiveness cannot be undertaken until the roles of both professional and paraprofessional school personnel are more clearly defined.

According to Olivero, teachers who have aides usually will not do without them, but those who are contemplating having aides are often apprehensive about sharing the classroom with another adult. He recommends development of training programs in which teachers and aides can learn to work together, thereby gaining a better understanding of their different roles in the education process. Teacher aides generally express satisfaction with their jobs. What complaints do arise often relate to teachers expecting too little or too much of the aides.

The use of paraprofessionals in elementary schools receives attention from Conant (1971). His study reveals significant findings on the division of workloads in the classroom, labor costs, and pupil achievement gains (specifically among disadvantaged children) when a program employing paraprofessionals complements conventional teaching arrangements. Conant concludes his presentation with a copy of the Oregon Rules and Guidelines for Teacher-Aide Training, Function, and Assignment.

A booklet published by the Bureau of Educational Personnel Development (Office of Education 1971) reports that low-income community residents and Vietnam era veterans are being employed in poverty area schools as educational auxiliaries while they study at universities cooperating with the Career Opportunities Program. The program demonstrates how community residents can help improve educational services and how school personnel can deliver performance-based learning. The booklet explains the program—benefits, administration, and people served.

Case histories that illustrate school district accomplishments in using Title I funds for improving the educational quality of economically and educationally disadvantaged children are provided by the Educational Service Bureau, Inc. (1970). While focusing on staff quality and use, the case histories provide suggestions for local school districts wishing to inaugurate projects to improve the quality of their teaching staffs. Ideas are presented for recruiting, training, and using teaching aides (paid or volunteer) to extend the effectiveness of the professional staff and to develop new ties with the community.

The major premise of Martin's (1970) study suggested that a significant relationship exists between the perceived quality of interpersonal relationships among teachers and semiprofessionals and specified personality dimensions. His sample was drawn from experienced teachers and semiprofessionals working in dyadic groups in kindergarten through twelfth-grade classrooms in central New York State public schools.

Study results indicate that personality dimensions do not significantly affect the quality of interpersonal relations in the workgroups sampled. Implications for future research may be concerned with the degree of mutuality of perception of each other's role, assumed similarity of personality, the process of perceiving the other dyadic member's character, and the effect of psychological health on interpersonal relations.

The final report of a New York City study examining paraprofessional influence on student achievement and attitudes and on paraprofessional performance outside the classroom is presented by Brickell and others (1971). Previous evaluation studies have left unanswered the question of what connection, if any, exists between measured student achievement in cognitive and affective areas, and the presence or absence of paraprofessional services.

In this study, pretest and posttest pupil achievement results and posttest scores from two attitude inventories served as dependent variables. Approximately four-fifths of the paraprofessionals studied served in the experimental and control classrooms. The nonclassroom personnel studied performed paraprofessional social work as family astants and family workers.

The study concluded that paraprofessionals significantly improve student achievement in reading and arithmetic; however, their effect on student attitudes is uncertain. Because the study of nonclassroom paraprofessionals began so late in the year, it was agreed that the investigation would be limited to an examination of their background and the work they perform rather than attempting to discover the effect they are having.

## Recruitment, Training, and Careers

Lang and others (n.d.) present a policy manual containing guidelines, standards, and procedures prepared to explain the Auxiliary Career Program in New York City schools. Introductory sections sketch the background and rationale for the program that was initiated in 1967 to employ low-income neighborhood residents as paraprofessional school personnel in a career-oriented work-study program. The major section of the manual outlines the training program for paraprofessionals (kindergarten and grades one and two), designed and coordinated by a central staff and carried out by district training teams. Included is the curriculum outline for the initial two-week orientation, the monthly (for three years) inservice training sessions, and the weekly team training of the classroom teacher with the paraprofessional.

The authors outline policy and procedure for selection of district training teams (a trainer-coordinator who is an experienced classroom teacher and an auxiliary trainer who is a skilled paraprofessional) and for selection of the paraprofessionals. They also describe the career ladder (progression from teacher aide to educational assistant to educational associate to assistant teacher to teacher), as well as qualifications and job descriptions for each paraprofessional and trainer. Evaluation questionnaires for use by principals and teachers are included.

The Title I Program operating in two

target schools in the Fremont (California) Unified School District is described by Lile and others (1970). The thirty-nine instructional aides employed were recruited through letters to parents and notices on shopping center bulletin boards. A committee including the principals of the two schools, the resource teachers, and a training teacher interviewed and selected participants. A target school principal and an experienced teacher conducted a six-week, four-hours-a-day, formal training program in which trainees received instruction in academic and general education topics.

The duties of aides in the Fremont district are varied. They are used in classrooms and pull-out programs to give individualized instruction to identified students in language arts and mathematics and are assigned other routine duties. Resource teachers are responsible for the supervision of the total program in each school and for weekly inservice meetings providing ongoing education for the aides. The program is evaluated by aides, teachers, principals, resource teachers, and reading and math specialists. Aides are observed monthly by a resource teacher and principal and are evaluated yearly by the teacher. In addition to copies of some curriculum materials used in the training program, the report includes forms used in recruitment, placement, and evaluation.

The specifics of paraprofessional training are treated in a document containing fifty-nine individually prescribed instruction modules for use in teacher aide education programs (Livingston University 1971). Each module has six sections: behavioral objectives, purpose, performance criteria, experiences, resources, and taxonomy. Some modules cover the use of instructional equipment such as the language master, carousel slide projector, projection screen, film projector, and tape recorder. Other modules are concerned with oral reading, collecting lunch money, arranging classroom furniture, identifying types of behavior, scoring tests, keeping attendance records, and so forth.

The first of two papers in a monograph by Bowman and Anderson (1971) describes the concepts of career ladders and career lattices for paraprofessionals, and the ways in which these concepts have been implemented in the past few years. This paper examines various aspects of implementation, including functions performed, requirements for advancement, training, compensation, recruitment and selection, evaluation, and credentials and certification. Some potential problems are considered, with strategies suggested for dealing with them. Finally, the various benefits resulting from a career ladder and paraprofessional program are discussed as they apply to the student, the paraprofessional, the professional, the institution, and the community.

The second paper describes the Career Opportunities Program of the United States Office of Education in detail. It discusses the operation of the program and considers future trends, including the use of differentiated staffs in team teaching and informal classrooms, the role of state agencies, revisions in teacher certification, the increased use of local funds, the effect of career lattices on school salary structure, and modifications in teacher training programs.

In response to the requests of area schools, the Center for the Study of Migrant and Indian Education at Washington State University compiled a set of guidelines for recruitment, selection, preparation, and use of teacher aides (1970). The source for the guideline data was a Teacher Aide Training Program initiated in October 1968. The guide includes the following specific topics:

- rationale for employing teacher aides
- goals for teacher aide training
- qualifications for teacher aides
- suggested teacher aide duties

The informal findings indicate that teacher aides are valuable not only to the teacher but also to the pupil, school, and community.

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For each order, indicate the ED numbers of the desired publications, the type of reproduction desired (paper or microfiche), and the number of copies being ordered.

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**Three terms were used in searching *Research in Education* for this review: Paraprofessional School Personnel, School Aides, and Teacher Aides.**

**Of these three terms, Paraprofessional School Personnel is the broadest and the most useful. Often that term will be indexed with Teacher Aides, a narrower but also quite useful term. School Aides is the least used of the three.**

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## RESEARCH HIGHLIGHTS

Paraprofessional work can be divided into clerical, housekeeping, instructional, motivational, and integrational duties. *Harris (1971)*

The EPDA Paraprofessional Training Project taxonomy categorizes paraprofessional tasks as noninteracting (clerical, housekeeping, or technical) and interacting (clerical, monitorial, or tutorial). *Johns and Glovinsky (1970)*

A 1968 study of teacher aides revealed that very little was known about the assistance that such aides provide. *Olivero [1970]*

Current paraprofessional programs train paraprofessionals to be competitive with teachers rather than supportive, emphasize community involvement for its own sake, and overburden classroom teachers with program responsibilities. *Harris (1971)*

A New York City study concluded that paraprofessionals significantly improve student achievement in reading and arithmetic. *Brickell and others (1971)*

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